

**Libby Area Technical Assistance Group Inc.****PO Box 53, Libby, MT 59923****August 12, 2003 Board Meeting Notes****In attendance:**

Bob Beagle	Bob Zimmerman	Red Morton
Clinton Maynard	Jon Reny	Scott Supernaugh
Sandy Wagner	Jerry Hersman	Carrie Croucher
Barb Guthneck	Mary Tevebaugh	George Keck
Gordon Sullivan	Charlene Leckrone	Darlene Guthneck
Learah Parker	Les Skramstad	Wendy Thomi
James Christiansen	John Wagner	Cathie Sullivan

**I Call to Order - II. Introductions** - George said that he recognized some new faces so everyone introduced themselves.

**III. Review and Approval of July 8, 2003 minutes** - The July 8<sup>th</sup> Board meeting minutes were approved and seconded with spelling corrected on Wendy's name and the word amphibole. Gordon and Jim Christiansen asked that there be a delay in approving the July 15<sup>th</sup> minutes until they could read them thoroughly. The Board did not object so the July 15<sup>th</sup> Special meeting notes will be brought up at the August meeting for approval.

**IV. September meeting date** - George set the meeting date for September 9, 7PM, County Annex Basement. Sandy stated that she had checked with the bank and found that even with their new renovations that we would not be able to use the elevator as it was inside the bank. It was decided that we stay with the County Annex for now.

**Old Business**

**A. Budget/Funding Status** - George announced that the electronic transfer funds for June paychecks for Gordon and Barb finally come today. Barb said that left \$6 balance again in the bank account. George said we are now waiting for the July reimbursement that included the insurance bill.

**B. July special Meetings/Report** - George explained that the Action Items came out of the July 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. George read all sixteen Action Items.

Gordon provided argument that action item number 11 (Establish/provide revised/updated Chris Weis studies and risk models replacing those deemed "flawed and outdated" for ease in reconciliation and validation of issues.) is not possible, that it is very complex with many documents and sources coming together and it's ongoing. Gordon said we shouldn't be challenging this as we don't have the expertise to do so.

Clinton said he had no problem with Dr. Christopher Weis, that he is the most competent person he has encountered in the science in this entire issue. He continued, whatever, wherever his work may be flawed, it is only flawed because our federal government hasn't made the change yet that distinguishes the differences in mineral types. Chris' work utilizing the standards/guidelines he had available at the time. The problem is with the standards/guidelines.

Jim explained that Chris took actual concentrations measured in Libby and applied those to NIOSH, OSHA and EPA high risk models. Jim said that Chris did not relate back to source materials where concentrations didn't reach the numbers in the study.

Jim said the next step would be for Chris to re do the studies and EPA is not interested in completely re-doing this. To avoid having to do this and fighting the battle, Jim says he takes a more pragmatic and protective approach to remove to a standard higher than EPA's standards (which he said, admittedly were not for Libby type asbestos). He said, the risk assessment data that they are looking at now, be assured Chris is very much involved. Jim said that the same toxicologist that provided the background information to Dr. Weis before, is working on the revisions and giving the information to Chris to write the revised risk assessment data. This time, he said, they will be going back to source materials using actuals to determine what is a risk and what it is not. Jim assured us they were working on getting the revised risk assessment data, that it was taking a little bit longer than they thought. George said that's all we're asking for and then we will be holding you to it.

While Jim said he hadn't read the action items in detail but that he would make a commitment to provide a written response, by hopefully, next TAG meeting. He said, I may not have answers to all, but will provide what we do have.

Clinton and Gordon agreed to exercise caution regarding making pre-judgements about the toxicity and admit that no one knows the toxicity. They asked to be kept informed so we could follow the education curve and together keep the public informed. Clinton said that he hazarded a guess that it might be 600 times more and that caution is cognizant of risks.

Jim stated that he is pushing the boundaries as part of a very big organization. So far, he said he has backing from higher ups but he cautioned, if you push, we will push back. He again stated that he was erring on being over protective. He said if you continue to press Chris' numbers and try to hold me to them, I'll tell you that we are not using them and that we are being over protective based on Chris's memo.

George said, just give us the procedures. He said if we are in emergency mode then clean up should be without cost constraints.

Gordon said it will be years before we know the true toxicity. He said if EPA went strictly by Weis's studies then we shouldn't be cleaning up yards. George said that we are in between phases and maybe shouldn't be taking action at all until we know. Mary

said, if it isn't necessary, let's not put people through this. Gordon replied that the homeowners have that decision to make to clean up or not. Mary asked how can we explain to our community whether they should have EPA clean up their yards, their walls or not?

Jim said if I have Option A to wait until we have perfect numbers to do the clean up or Option B to keep going and if screw up, go back, then I will choose Option B every time.

Jim stressed that he felt we should be cleaning up yards, etc. or wouldn't be doing. Jim gave an example of different levels of risk such as a person pumping their own gas in their car occasionally or a person pumping gas, all day, every day for 30 years, inferring that the person pumping his own gas occasionally was at a reasonable risk while the person doing it all the time would need protection. Jim said much of risk is long term in nature and that facing it once or twice a year or once a lifetime is not going to pose excessive risk. It's the continuous long exposures that will affect their health.

Gordon asked Jim if we are impacting the next generation by subjecting Libby people in their 20's to be doing the clean up without adequate, consistent protection.

Jim said, regarding Health and Safety, I just gave that to the Health and Safety Plan for CDM and contractors for Gordon to look over. He said that OSHA has been in and around the clean up sites for months and they have not found anything to report. He said there have been no air sample monitors showing any contamination.

Clinton said amphiboles don't stay suspended like those Chris' study used. He said when you get exposed to Libby amphiboles is when you stir them up. He said they are not just floating around in the community. He continued that he had visited two active clean up sites and saw that the intake monitors were pointed at the ground and that wouldn't catch the asbestos. Jim said, if we turn them up, they will catch all the debris floating in the air. Gordon suggested that he put up a duplicate set of monitors next to one another, one turned up, the other turned down. Jim said, in general it is standard procedure to point down but OK, it doesn't cost anything but he's sure we won't find anything.

Bob Beagle said that from what he knows, if you took a vote today that 80% of the people in the community just want EPA in and out, period. He says, he doesn't think they care how they get there, just give me a letter of comfort and that's all I care. George said, what happens when they have their property cleaned and find out later it is still contaminated and start complaining. Bob said he didn't think people cared about the monitoring.

Jim said that he didn't know if it was 80% of the people, but that it is important to do it right and the MOST important thing is to finish! He said any clean up is better than the leaving it in the condition it's in now.

George asked, how many people are totally happy with their clean up. Jim said there were an extremely high number of people totally satisfied. He said after he gives them their comfort letter, they sell their house and 2 years after we're gone, life goes on.

Bob Zimmerman admitted that he needs to do some catch up but asked why they would block off the vent system to do the test. He said it's an air recycling system. Whenever you change a filter, you are dislodging contaminants, depending on how you handle it. What are the procedures used elsewhere? He said EPA hasn't done much large scale home clean ups. Places they are cleaning they aren't doing ventilation systems or replacing carpets. He reiterated that cleaning ventilation systems is not easy. He said my policy is to get the big things, not concentrate on the high cost items that contain very little and go back later and recheck. Jim replied that if the heating system has no problems after the clean up with no signs of asbestos, then he says it's not a problem.

Jim at this point admitted that the new Bergman-Crump risk model that is coming out for Libby asbestos, shows 10 times higher than previously used data. Clinton asked Jim for a transcript of the conference regarding the Bergman Crump risk model.

George said it is not a valid air test to block off the heater vents. Jim said we do that to set up a negative pressure exposure as we are told to do under the asbestos and hazard emergency response act. We are following that procedure. He said concerns about this should be covered under educating the community to change their filters.

Some pictures were submitted to the Board by Bob Zimmerman that showed a "backscat thing" covered in a plastic cover. When it started going faster, it ballooned up said that he took continuous pictures as it went along. His perception was that it contained contaminated materials.

Clinton regarding action item number 17 (Establish/provide follow-up claim responsibility policy for cleaned up sites after the EPA moves on, the state's, the homeowner's, and the EPA's.) asked if the comfort letter that Jim was going to give to people would tell what was left in the way of contamination and how to deal with it in the future. Bob B. asked if it was too much to ask that we be treated like the rest of the world and even though a home elsewhere might contain asbestos, they don't have \$20,000 taken off the value of their real estate just because they're not in a Superfund site.

Mary said if the government hadn't been looking the other way in the 60's we wouldn't be dealing with all this and if we look the other way and don't do a good job then our grandchildren will be facing the same mess. I agree with Bob that 80% of the people aren't paying attention to the clean up and only want to go on with their lives. But she said, we as a Board are charged with making sure it is done right.

Les said his house was being cleaned when vermiculite ore of various sizes and descriptions was found under the floor boards. EPA contractors told him, it was non-detect. He said EPA chose not to clean it up other than to put a little plastic on the ground and up to the pipes. He said he has been under the house a number of times and

that it is a continuing health hazard to him and anybody who comes to work on pipes, electric, etc. His concern was the real estate disclosure statement that he would have to sign, if and when he sold it, he would have to disclose the asbestos being there. He feels that if the potential buyer wasn't satisfied with the plastic, as he is not, then at his expense he would have to bring in someone to remove it. He says if EPA gave him a comfort letter saying there was no asbestos, he couldn't in good conscience sell the house to someone else without telling them about the asbestos that was still there. His other concern is that people don't know what this contaminant looks like and are being endangered through this ignorance. Les said it was someone he hired that came upon it and knew what it was. He said he brought out a sack full of the stuff to show the guy in charge of the clean up on his sight. In trying to figure out what he was looking at the guy in charge put his face in it.

Sandy asked Jim what would the comfort letter to Les say? Jim said that right now, he is giving a general letter that once they clean a house that the house is clean. He is, however, looking in the future, whether to give a letter which will disclose the specifics of what they know is there. He is reluctant because elsewhere asbestos doesn't have to be disclosed.

Mary asked if there was a forest fire that reached a home with asbestos, would the result of the air borne asbestos contaminate the entire community. Jim responded, not likely.

**C. Tiger Team Reports** – Sandy and Wendy met regarding a much needed community education project.

**D. Grant opportunity – Environmental Justice Grant** – George reported that the medical community was working on this and so far didn't need any input or help from us.

## **VI. New Business**

**A. EPA Update** – Jim said he would give a written response at the next TAG meeting.

Sandy said that Craig French from the State should be here fairly regularly and we should send the minutes to him. It was pointed out that the Board wanted Aubrey here too.

**B. Technical Advisor's Update** – Gordon said he wanted for a future discussion item, the number of houses being cleaned up.

Gordon said the ER folks were concerned how TAG might be affecting their job. He said he talked for 40 minutes at one of their meetings. He said they had a lot of questions and they had a nice engaging conversation.

Clinton said regarding worker safety, OSHA regulations are not protective with the Libby mineral fiber. Jim said OSHA acknowledges that their standard is not fully protective.  
(Meeting adjourned)